



THE SAVVY CONSUMER COLUMN

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Pet-shipping scams are all swindle, no animal

NASHVILLE, TN – Have you seen an ad on an Internet site or in an email promising a free purebred or rare pet from another country or another state? If so, it may be a scam that is making the rounds.

Scammers post ads on websites such as Craigslist or eBay, promising a free, rare animal. All the consumer needs to do is pay for shipping to receive the pet. However, once you pay the shipping price, you are then asked to pay for a special crate for your new pet. After that, you are then told to pay for taxes, airline shipping fees and for a health department checkup. At this point, if you are still sending the seller money, they will ask you to send more for vet fees, stating that the animal became sick en route and the vet will not release the animal without payment.

In the end, the consumer does not receive the promised rare pet and is out hundreds or even thousands of dollars. In some cases, the scammers pose as breeders, hosting phony websites and using pictures they have stolen from legitimate breeder sites. In other instances, the scammer claims to be a missionary and that they have a wonderful purebred puppy or exotic animal that they cannot care for anymore. The owner, the scam goes, is willing to give the animal away for free if they can find a good home for it in the United States.

Use caution when considering online or international pet offers. The offers are usually followed by an urgent plea to wire money immediately. Once money is wired, your chances of ever recovering it are very slim.

When purchasing an animal from a breeder, broker or other parties, research to ensure that you are dealing with a legitimate company.

To file a complaint with the Division of Consumer Affairs, visit <http://tn.gov/consumer/complaint.shtml>.

Consumer Affairs (www.tn.gov/consumer/) is a division of the Department of Commerce and Insurance (www.tn.gov/commerce/), which works to protect consumers while ensuring fair competition for industries and professionals who do business in Tennessee.
